

66-R-638 Chron-3

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DDR - NRO/DOD - Surfacing the R-12

TS-4834-62

26 Dec 1962

Memo for DCI from DDR (HSJr.)

After reviewing draft memo from DNRO to SecDef (19 Dec) and proposed draft statement on above subject, ...believe statement in no way conceals true purpose of X-21/A-12 development and association of LAC, high secrecy, and the recon program make any attempt at concealment ridiculous. Also risks compromising the very small radar cross section improvement once merits of R-12 vs R-70 are compared publicly.

If US Govt publicly announces new type of aircraft which is speculated upon publicly as having recon purpose, could lead to official statements being made that no intention to use the aircraft for overflights in peacetime, thus inhibiting its use for intel collection. DDR believed that recent experiences in Cuba graphically demonstrated absolute need for US to have capability of flying a vehicle such as the A-12 over the Soviet Union...I believe, therefore, that you as DCI should make it absolutely clear to the highest authority that this capability should not be jeopardized without the strongest type of justification..."

"4. I am personally not convinced that such justification exists. In fact, the strongest justification for the RX is primarily political in nature. The DOD has got itself in difficulty with Congress, the AF and the aerospace industry due to the B-70 program. The present RX version is about the last mile in an attempt to provide an alternative to this program and thereby avoid the political  
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The proposed RX has few, if any characteristics which cannot be satisfied by other systems. If one really desired to obtain high-quality photographic intelligence with a high degree of reliability in a crisis, pre-strike situation, then the A-12 is a much more reliable system for obtaining this information than the R-12. The increased penetration capability resulting from the very low radar cross section of the A-12 would probably more than offset the advantages gained by having 2 people and

25X1 [ ] This may be an oversimplification of the capabilities of the R-12, but nevertheless, it is really not clear that this presents a major improvement in our pre-strike reconnaissance capabilities. The post-strike capabilities are similarly questionable since most of the systems do not involve direct readout. ...I think you should make it very clear that you question in the national good ~~this~~ the wisdom of jeopardizing a very critical intelligence capability to provide very marginal advantages or to ameliorate a difficult political problem. In this latter connection I personally have very great doubts as to whether the R-12 will really solve the political questions since we do not believe it will satisfy either the Congress or the aerospace industry. The recent decision to cancel Skybolt in favor of Polaris will give LAC a boost. They also recently won the C 141 jet transport prime contracts. Since they are now the biggest DOD contractor, cancelling the B-70 for the A-12 under such circumstances will surely cause at least as much trouble with industry as just cancelling the B-70 outright. This will be further complicated by the fact that it will be very difficult to subcontract any of the A-12 work to new contractors ~~who do not have the specialized skills and equipment required to handle titanium.~~ In the national good it might be better to just drag on the B-70 than to toss the A-12 to the wolves.

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.....In summary, I believe that this issue is of such vital importance to the national security that it cannot be dealt with in terms of political necessity. I believe that it is absolutely essential that this issue be made crystal clear to the President (Kennedy) and that one should not allow a such a critical national asset to be sacrificed to rescue the Defense Department from a difficult situation.

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